



SEAFOOD INSPECTION PROGRAM  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
1315 EAST-WEST HIGHWAY  
SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND 20910-3282  
USA



September 22, 2005

MEMORANDUM FOR: All Plants and Users of USDC Seafood Inspection Program Services

FROM: Richard V. Cano *Richard V. Cano*  
Acting Director, Seafood Inspection Program

SUBJECT: Notice of Policy Change regarding Product Inspection and Certification in Foreign Countries

During the last several years the Seafood Inspection Program has received numerous requests regarding expanding its audit program of foreign facilities relative to compliance with U.S. requirements and importers' specifications to provide for product inspection and certification at these facilities. These requests have been made by U.S. importers, processors, and retailers, as well as by representatives of foreign firms and governments. The reasons that have been presented for providing product inspection and certification in foreign facilities include:

- 1) increase assurances that products will meet U.S. regulatory requirements (e.g., safety, wholesomeness, and proper labeling) and buyer specifications prior to shipment to the United States;
- 2) reduce or eliminate interruptions in supply of acceptable products; and
- 3) increase assurances that facilities address security issues.

The Seafood Inspection Program has conferred with other industry members and NOAA Fisheries officials and has concluded that a policy change to provide for product inspection and certification in foreign countries would be beneficial to the industry and consumers. Therefore, such services will be available to interested parties under the following principles:

- 1) procedures used in foreign facilities will be identical to those used in the U.S.;
- 2) all costs for inspection activities will be fully recovered, including the costs associated with routine inspection activities, periodic analytical tests (as appropriate to risk and compliance history), and not less than one annual supervisory visit to covered facilities;
- 3) official inspection functions will be performed by U.S. employees; and
- 4) the "USDC Officially Sampled" mark will be used on the outside of master cartons to identify lots that have been inspected under this program. However, no official inspection marks (e.g., U.S. Grade A, Processed Under Federal Inspection) will be permitted on primary packaging material.

In order to initiate such inspection services, the requestor must identify the exact location (i.e., city, state/province, and country) of each facility and the respective products and anticipated volumes. This information will be used to provide the requestor initial inspection options and to determine through the U.S. Department of State/Embassy whether it is feasible for U.S. personnel to perform the requested activities due to various issues, including safety, security, and acceptability to the foreign government. The timeframe to commence product inspection and certification services will be dependent on adequately addressing these variables.

Additional information on these services may be obtained through the Seafood Inspection Program regional or headquarters offices, or by sending inquiries to:

[NMFS.International.Seafood.Services@noaa.gov](mailto:NMFS.International.Seafood.Services@noaa.gov)